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The Keystone and the Arch

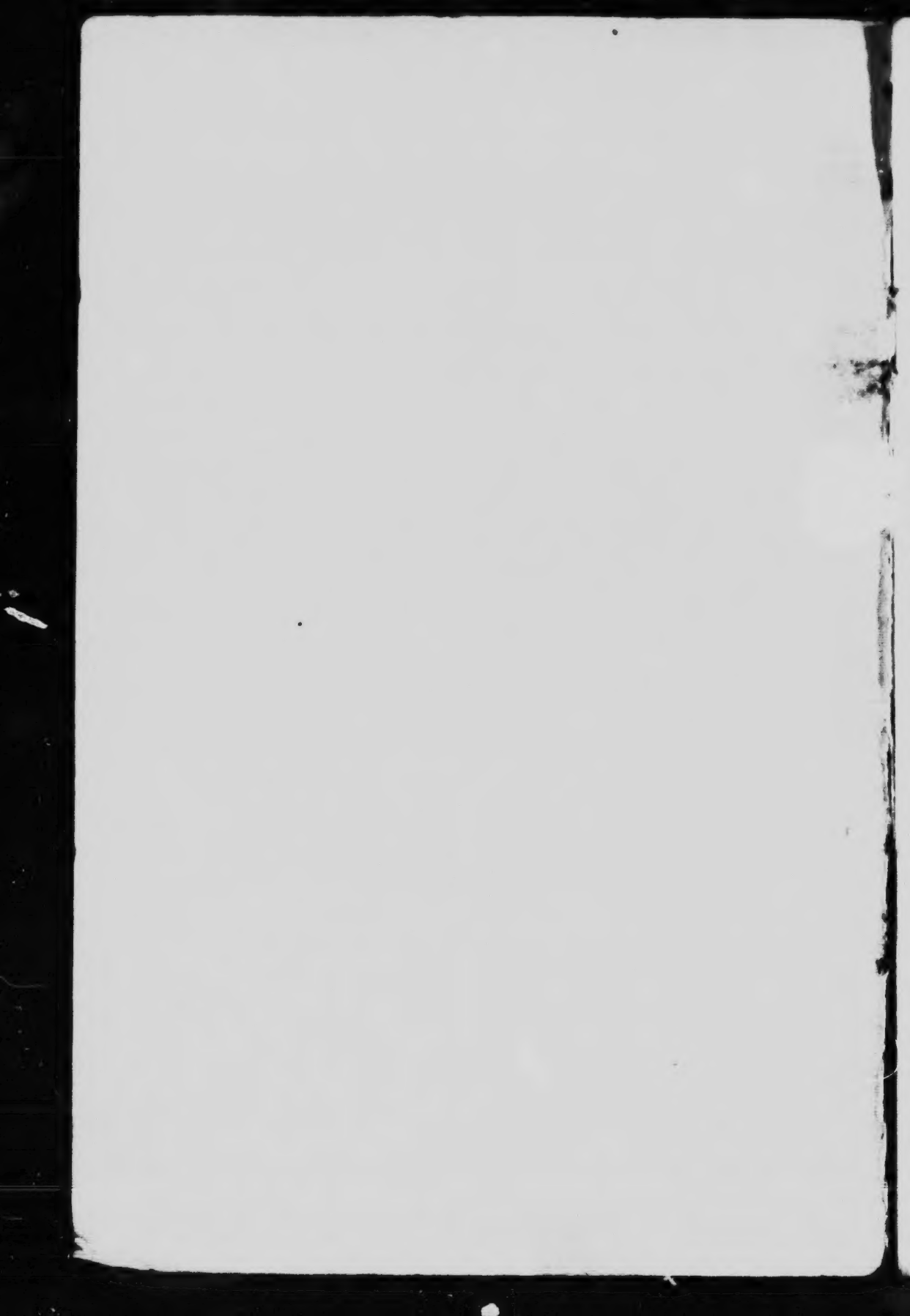
SERMON

DELIVERED TO THE

ROYAL ARCH MASONS OF MONTREAL

on SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 22ND, 1914
at 4 P.M.

IN THE CHURCH OF ST. JAMES THE APOSTLE BY
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The Keystone and the Arch

TEXT: REVELATIONS II., 17.—"I will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth, saving he that receiveth it."

BRETHREN, I give you a picture, familiar to all Royal Arch Masons. Two stately pillars rise from separate bases. They climb upward through space, course on course. But at a certain point they curve, and approach each other. Yet they do not meet. They are waiting for something, different from each, which will unite both. They are waiting for the keystone! Both are imperfect, incomplete, fragmentary. The keystone completes them. It binds the fragments into a unit; it weds the pillars into an arch.

This is an illustration of the position and privilege of Royal Arch Masonry. It interprets for us the office of the Keystone and the Arch. I need not remind you of the place that these symbols occupy in our ritual. But with this most appropriate text as my guide, let me give them a spiritual interpretation.

The main thought is that of *completion*. This is the function of the keystone—to complete. It binds the separated together. Royal Arch Masonry is the completion of Blue Lodge Masonry. This is true historically as well as morally. You

will recall the prominence given to the two pillars in the ritual of the Blue Lodge. But they await the Keystone and the Arch in the higher degrees in order to bind them together and make a perfect unity. Blue Lodge Masonry ends in the tragedy of a death. Royal Arch Masonry closes in the joy of a discovery. Thus the two are bound together in order to make a complete and perfect organization.

Let me carry out the thought in various directions in order that we may realize our high calling. Pillars stand for strength and support in all the spheres of human activity. The keystone is everywhere the symbol of union. And the highest and most enduring strength is discovered in unity.

1. *The first pair of pillars.*

Let us name them

- (a) The Individual,
- (b) Society.

Here are the multitudes of individual lives, standing like rows and clusters of pillars; each with its own beauty, power, endowment, purpose and aim. How shall they be kept from selfishness? In what way can they best fulfil their purpose in life? There are men ready enough to tell you the dangers of society—its temptations, its ministration to man's weaknesses. So often have our sins had their birth in social relations that we are tempted to live apart from the great host of men.

It is easy to single out the ages when Individualism was the central thought. And so the pillars stand separate and alone!

And here you have the great social body, the mass of humanity, with its inter-relations and contacts or communions. How shall it be kept sober and steady? What shall deliver us from the perils of the crowd, the unthinking mob? How shall man mix with his fellows and still keep his identity and not be swallowed up in the great flood? To-day, perhaps more than any age of the world, the word is Socialism! And yet there are prophets enough to warn us of the dangers and pitfalls of social movements. What shall bind these two pillars together so that they may be mutually serviceable? "And I will give him a white stone and in the stone a new name written which no man knoweth, saving he that receiveth it." Thus there is put into our hands the key-stone, and upon it the word *Companion* is inscribed. We drop it between the points of the arch and behold! the individual and society are wedded together into a complete whole. You will not forget, brethren, the peculiar name by which we are designated. We are all *Companions*! And that is the word and reality which we need in order to link together the individual and society. It will teach us all as individuals to make the most of our lives in the interests of others. We will preserve our identity and yet serve our fellows. Self-culture will be the law of our lives, but only that we may be the better fitted to minis-

ter to our brethren. Self-consciousness will be kept from selfishness by the principle of self-forgetfulness. "No man liveth to himself alone" will be the interpretation of our companionship. Standing here among our fellows, touching their lives at so many points, we will labour to make the contact helpful. Gaining strength from them we shall also impart strength. Absolute independence is for the Royal Arch Mason unthinkable. Companionship is the keystone of this arch!

2. *The second pair of pillars.*

Let us designate them—

(a) Patriotism;

(b) Humanitarianism.

Here are the multitudes of patriots, loving their [] with intense affection! What a rich story is this of national patriotism! The world is full of noble inspirations because of passionate devotion to home and country. And what worthier thing could move a man than this?

"And how shall Man die better than facing fearful odds
For the ashes of his fathers and the temples of his gods."

And yet there is danger of this patriotism becoming insular and arrogant! How shall it be kept back from contempt? What shall deliver it from "frantic boast and foolish word"? Is there not danger of its becoming local and sectional? This pillar must not stand separated from others! And here we have, too, the splendid

column of humanitarianism! The great body of humanity with its differing nationalities, so often set sadly in defiance of each other! Is there no way to bring them into co-operative strength? Can we save humanitarianism from indefiniteness and vagueness? What mystic tie shall bind the nations together? "And I will give him a white stone and in the stone a new name written which no man knoweth, saving he that receiveth it."

The Divine Architect places in our hands the keystone and on it is written the word *Brotherhood*. Drop this principle into men's hearts and wars would cease in all the world. The nations would walk together in international unity and concord. Here we stand, my brethren, pledged to this very task. For the Masonic Institution exists for the sole purpose of manifesting fraternity. "Behold how good and how pleasant a thing it is for brethren to dwell together in unity." Had Masonry become a real and universal thing, we would not to-day be witnessing the conflict of nations. There are strong evidences of the growing sense of brotherhood! Take our British Empire as an illustration! She is a fraternity of nations! Within her borders may be found every race and tongue. Indians, Africans, Chinese, French, English, Scotch, Irish—and many others! All these with their own national traditions and glowing patriotism! And yet these days are furnishing us with splendid evidences of imperial unity. Here stand the pillars of Canada, Australia, New Zealand, India, Africa, and the

United Kingdom! But bound together by the keystone of Brotherhood in such a noble way as to present to the whole world the stirring spectacle of unbreakable unity. Broaden that idea, brethren, until it includes all nations! "For God hath made of one blood all the nations upon earth." And how quickly would the pillars of patriotism and humanitarianism be bound together! 'Mid the clash of arms and roar of cannons we take heart of courage that universal brotherhood will some day be established, for we witness our Empire taking up arms on behalf of Belgium, and standing side by side with France and Russia in a common cause. Masonry does not forbid patriotism, but she asks that an equal place in the sun be granted to other nations. There is no graver enemy within our borders than he who would develop a nationalism that hinders a wider imperialism. So let us make use of this white stone of brotherhood until the nations "shall beat their swords into ploughshares, neither shall they learn war any more."

3. *The Third Pair of Pillars.*

Let us call them

(a) The Material,

(b) The Spiritual.

How prone men are to keep them apart! The gorgeous pillar of material interests—lands, money, cities, railroads, mines, ships, houses—has such immense proportions that we can see nothing else. These obtrude upon our vision continu-

ally. They are so real, tangible, self-evident, that our minds become obsessed with the pursuit of the material.

But let us not forget that another pillar stands, lifting its top against the sky. The spiritual structure—love, joy, peace, righteousness, purity, immortality! And of the two, the spiritual is the more enduring and beautiful. But how shall we bring them together, so that men shall give them a just proportion of attention? Is there no keystone to complete this arch?

"And I will give him a white stone and in the stone a new name written which no man knoweth, saving he that receiveth it." The true Mason has this stone in his possession and on it is engraved the word *Truth*. Need I remind you, brothers, of the place given to this word in the ritual of Royal Arch Masonry? Are we not on a journey of discovery? Is not pursuit of truth the aim of our organization? And do you not recall the joy when it was discovered? Truth teaches us that the material is the symbol of the spiritual. To love the material for itself is like a petulant child that hugs the husk after the kernel is extracted or like a foolish woman who clings to the case after the jewels have been stolen! You cannot have the spiritual except thro' the material. "First the natural and afterwards the spiritual." We value the symbol only because of the reality. Is not that the teaching of our manifold ceremonies? It is good to wear the keystone on your watch-guard—but it is

infinitely better to wear the truth of which it is the symbol, upon your life and character. If men would but realize the uniting quality of truth, all these beautiful pillars of material things would glow with spiritual meaning. The natural and spiritual ought never to be separated—they form a complete unity, and Truth is the keystone which weds them together.

4. *The Fourth Pair of Pillars.*

Let us write them

(a) The Human,

(b) The Divine.

The human column, with its struggles and failures, its passions and weaknesses, its ambitions and successes! It has been built up by the labours of the years. What a history is that of man's growth and development through the long ages! Based upon the primitive instincts, this pillar has risen slowly, growing more beautiful at each course until its top pierces the clouds.

And the pillar of the Divine! The majesty and greatness of God! Throned in the heavens! Of such holiness and purity that man hardly dares to look upon His Awful Presence! Well do Masons come to learn His Might and Justice and Mercy. The symbol of His Presence is continually before our eyes. From the youngest Mason, in the North-East corner of the lodge to the Worshipful Master in the East—all make homage to the name of Deity.

But must these pillars be kept so far apart? Cannot man reach up to God? Or will not God condescend to reach down to man? Is there no approach of the Divine to the human? "And I will give him a white stone and in the stone a new name written which no man knoweth, saving he that receiveth it."

Into our hands is placed the keystone and on it is written the ineffable word *Incarnation*. Jesus has bound together the human and the divine. Have you not heard this sentence, my brethren? "The stone which the builders refused is become the headstone of the corner. This is the Lord's doings and it is marvellous in our eyes." Not less than four times is this text used in our ceremonies!

" This shall be the sacred *mark*
Which shall guide us to the skies
Bearing, like a holy *ark*
All the hearts who love to rise;
This shall be the *corner-stone*
Which the builders threw away,
But was found the only one
Fitted for the *arch's* stay.

Christ is the keystone of the arch! "Ye are complete in Him." All the degrees of Masonry lead up to the Master of the Temple. Without Him our institution is incomplete. Jesus, the Elder Brother, brings God and Man together. Now we know that we are divine. Back and forth over the arch runs the tide of divine-human life. Emmanuel—God with us. Our life must be one sublime effort to manifest the life of God to the

world. And the very best way to do it is by loving our brethren. "And this commandment have we from Him, that he who loveth God loves his brother also." The pillar of the human life is arched to meet the pillar of the divine, and Jesus is the keystone that completes the Arch.

Thus, my brothers, I have tried to interpret for you the symbol of our order. I have chosen four pairs of pillars because you will remember the significance of the number four in Royal Arch Masonry. This is the serious character of our obligation. What manner of men ought we to be? The golden words of *Companionship*, *Brotherhood*, *Truth* and *Incarnation* must be kept glowing in our lives. The mystic letters of the keystone must never grow dim. The pillars of the Temple must be arched and locked together until a compact and beautiful structure shall grace this present life, like unto that spiritual building, "the House of God, not made with hands, eternal in the Heavens."